

Report on the Excavations at Tell Sitak: The 2010 Season

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Background

Recent excavations at Tell Sitak (545534, 3944367 UTM 38N) in Iraqi Kurdistan contribute new information on the Sassanian and Neo-Assyrian occupations of this region. In 2013, the primary author undertook a research trip to London in order to publish this and other archaeological excavations by the Directorate of Antiquities in Slemani. The author would like to express his deep felt appreciation to the British Institute for the Study of Iraq for supporting this trip and enabling this publication under the Christie Malloyan Visiting Scholars program.

Tell Sitak sits along a ridge in a mountainous area (Figure 1a) of Slemani (Suleymaniyah) province in the Kurdish Autonomous Region of Iraq; the excavated part of the site is found in a newly built area in the town of Sitak (1b). Modern buildings have likely obscured or damaged part of the site and only a portion of the site has so far been uncovered. The known total size of the site is at least 0.2 ha and is located at an elevation of 971 m above sea level; steep ravines would have made the site relatively difficult to access in antiquity. The richness of the region's natural flora include almond, walnuts, and oak trees, while wild mountain goat can still be found. The name of the site, Sitak, derives from the modern town that encompasses the site. The name originates from two Kurdish words, which are "three singles." The town of Sitak is one of four towns that extend from west to east along a difficult mountainous route that connects to the modern border with Iran. The towns are 10-30 km from each other and their names reference the numbers two through five. Dukan is named after two, Sitak has the word "three" as part of the name, Chewarta is four, and Penjwin is five. The ancient name of the region that is known is Kelmzien, which means in Kurdish "absorbent soil." This name likely derives from local people observing that over the years the area's terrain was shrinking (i.e., subsiding), which could have been due to natural changes such as erosion, seismic activity, or subsurface hydrologic changes, including extraction or discharge of groundwater. In fact, during the season we had witnessed a large movement of earth from the top of the hill to the ridge along the wadi edges during periods of precipitation.

The site was selected for excavation as a salvage project due to recent building activities that exposed a large amount of ceramics. Previously, the site was unknown, but with the exposure of a large number of ceramics and stone foundations, local authorities alerted the Department of Antiquities in Slemani province and excavations began promptly with a salvage project starting in October 2010. During excavations, it became apparent that the site is damaged by military activity, likely from the Iran-Iraq war, with tree growth, including large tree roots, damaging walls. Three areas of excavation were chosen, which were designated Areas A-C, with individual excavation squares measuring 5 x 5 m (Figure 2). Area D was opened only in the last week of excavation; four

exploratory squares measuring 2 x 2 m were opened. Area D, located to the southwest of Area C, was opened after the discovery of a large wall made by an owner of a house. Overall, three levels were exposed, with Level 1 having two building phases. We date Level 1 to the Sassanian period and Levels 2-3 to the Neo-Assyrian. Evidence of post-Assyrian occupation is evident in Level 2, suggesting the site continued for sometime after the end of this period. No further archaeological levels are found below the Neo-Assyrian layers; however, it is unclear if virgin soil was reached in all areas. We begin the discussion below from the oldest to youngest layers.

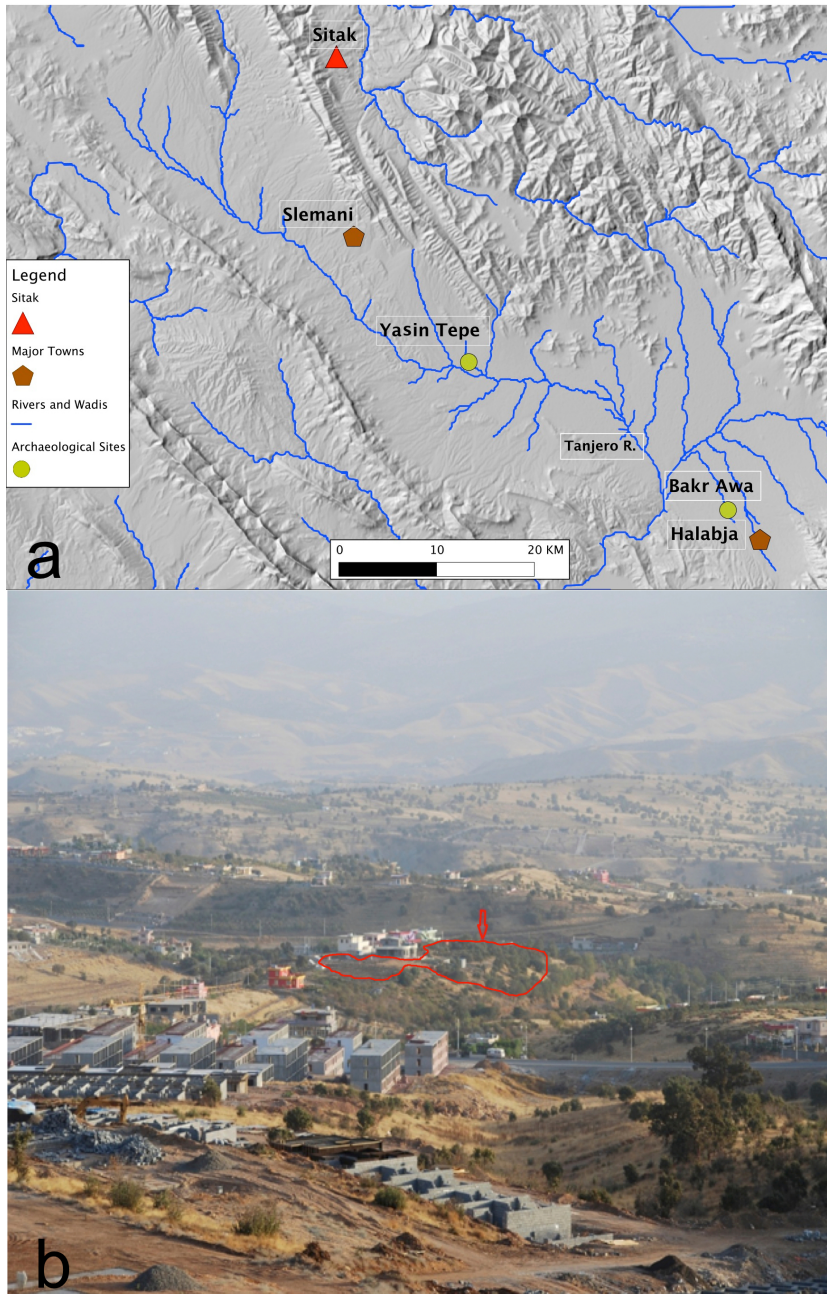


Figure 1. Map of the region near Tell Sitak and nearby major archaeological sites (a) and photograph showing the outline of the known area of the site.

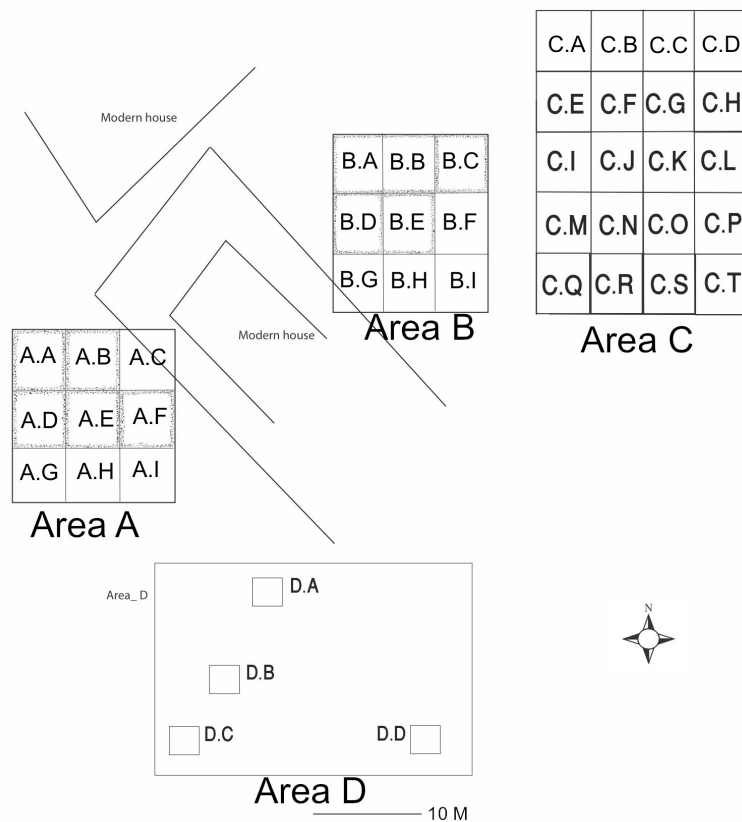


Figure 2. General plan of areas excavated.

Archaeological Results

Level 3

A structure or group of structures, between 1.8-1.0 m below the surface, were uncovered in the two northern areas (Areas A and B) and to the east (Area C); this represents the deepest areas in which the excavations reached. In square A.A, a pavement made of small fragmentary stones is found that sloped to the west. A small part of a wall and pavement is also seen (Figure 3). In Area B, which is 15 m northeast of Area A, square B.A reveals groups of stones perpendicular to the west section of the square; this is interpreted to be the same level as Level 3 in Area A based on similar architectural orientation and cultural remains, although we cannot be sure. To the east of this, a group of small stones extending over 2 m is evident and that partly extends into the northeast part of the section. While much of the intact architecture dates to Level 1, small areas of floors associated with Level 3 are evident. This is also true for loci 1 and 2 in the square. To the east, in square B.B, reaching a width of 1.1 m, a base of a wall made of small stones was found (Figure 4). The northwest corner of B.C shows remains of a paved floor made of mostly small stones; adjacent to the northern wall, a large stone with 35 cm height was found, which was worked and could have formed part of an unclear installation. In the western part of B.B are two walls that have very small stones forming the bases. Within B.B, the

north of the square is disturbed by a later pit. In Area C, some undisturbed walls are found to exist, but there was no time to properly excavate this level for the area. Square C.O may show an earlier phase of tower fortifications, with two half-circle shaped structures found (Figure 5). Squares C.F, C.G, and C.J shows some evidence of wall foundations or architecture from the level. While the remains of this level are not clear, we interpret this to be likely remains of a fortress, perhaps the earliest phase of the structure more clearly evident in Level 2.

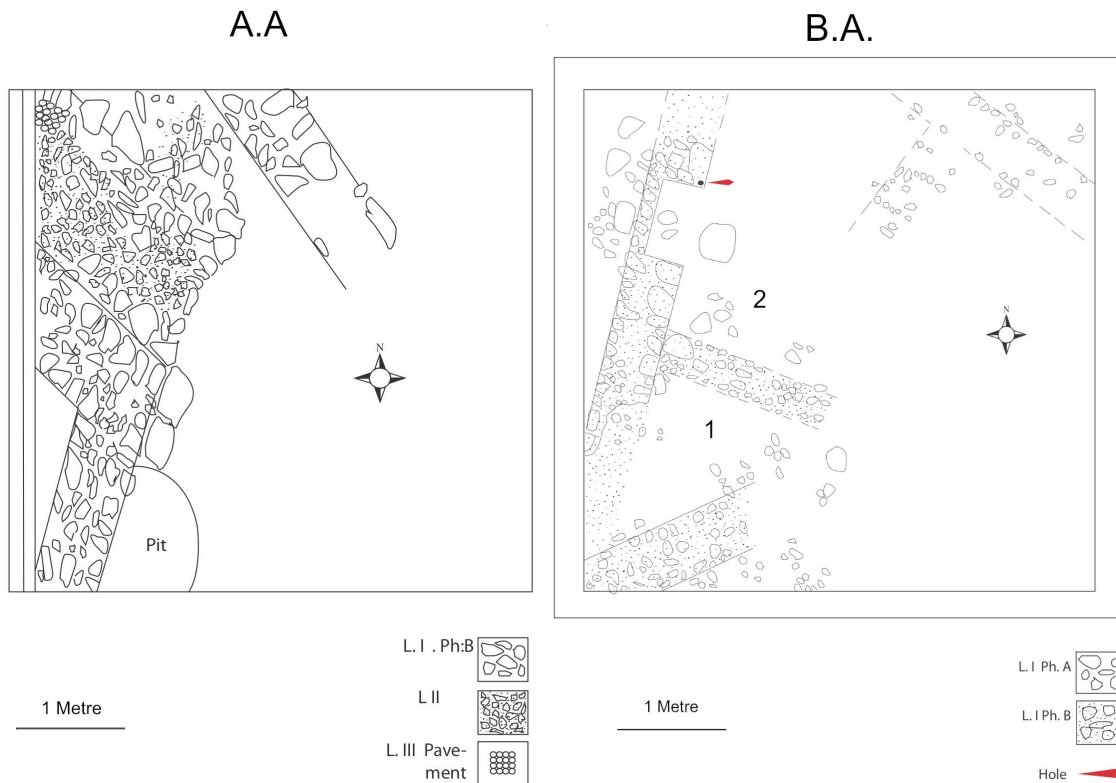


Figure 3. Squares A.A and B.A architectural remains.

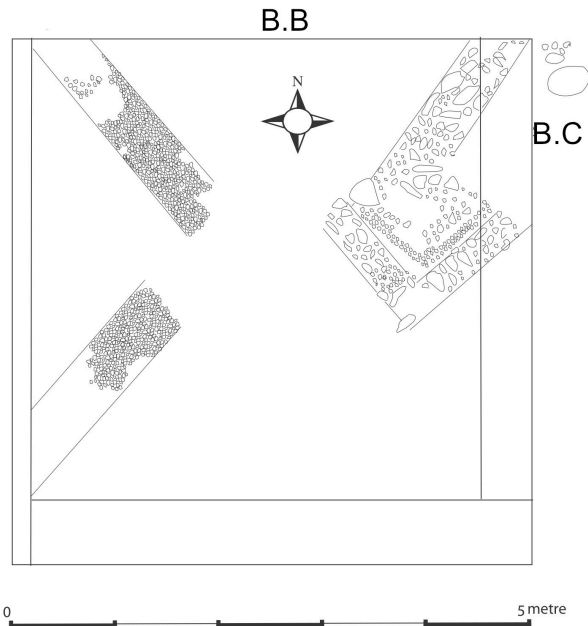


Figure 4. Square B.B remains.

Level 2

This level ranges between 1.0-0.3 m below the surface in areas excavated, with some areas even protruding above the surface in parts of the site that are more greatly sloped. The remains in this level are much more significant, with large and worked stones incorporated into walls that have flat surfaces. The large structures uncovered in this level are paved with courses of large sand stones (Figure 5). At this stage, the site clearly becomes a fortification, with evidence of three walls having defensive towers. To the east in Area C, the fortifications are particularly evident near a wadi (Figure 6). This area proved to be the most intact among areas excavated. A large wall, perhaps a large outer defensive wall, is found protruding toward the wadi. This wall is found to have large stones with dimensions approximately 110 x 40 x 40 cm and 40 x 40 x 40 cm.

The builders of Level 2 largely used mud brick and stone in the inner architecture of the area, with the stones being of different sizes in the centre of walls and long stones used as bonding for the facing and fill stones. Small rectangular stones are also hewn and incorporated into the walls that closed different gaps between the larger stones in the facing. The uncovered structures are interpreted to be part of a fortress compound (Area C), with Areas A and B perhaps being barracks, living quarters, or even facilities for fortress administration. The following provides further description regarding these exposed structures.

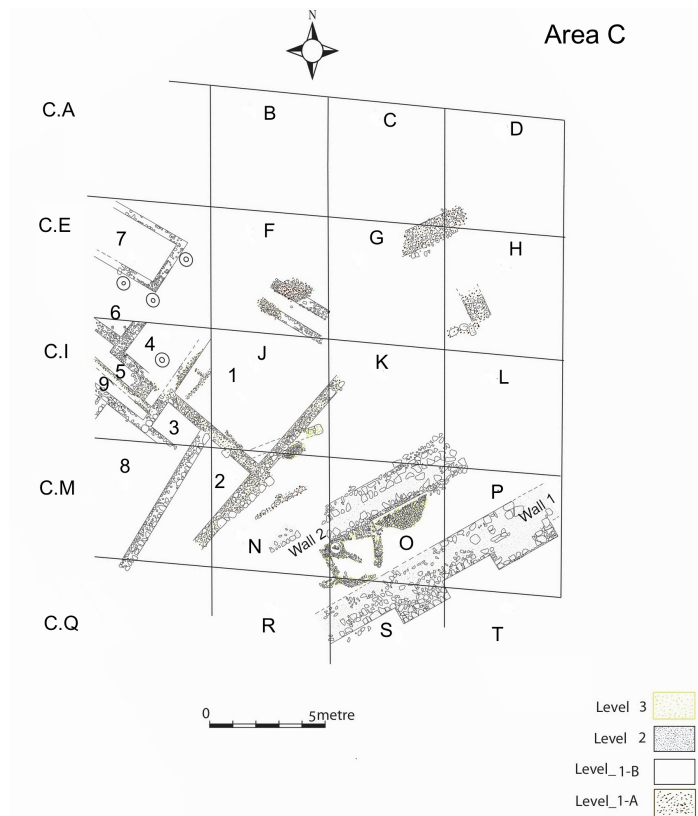


Figure 5. Plan of Level 2 in Area C and remains of other levels.

Fortifications:

Two large and long walls running southwest to northeast (Walls 1 and 2) and parallel to each other are evident. These walls represent the clearest evidence for fortifications (Figure 6). The first wall is supported by two square-shaped towers and the distance between the towers is 2.75 m, with the area between forming an alcove. The length of the first tower (C.P) is 3.75 m, while the second (C.S) is 2.75 m. The two towers protrude roughly 1 m from the wall. The width of the larger tower, which is built by large flat stones, reaches 2.9 m. The height of the wall preserved is 1.25 m and has four courses of large stones evident. At 3.5 m distance from the first wall, the second wall is found, which is also built from large flat stones. The width of this wall is 2.25 m. Later secondary structures, specifically a rounded stone-lined structure and a rounded enclosure (C.O) between the two large walls, are found. Such remains emphasize the potentially strategic significance of the site as a fortified area. The two large walls lie at slightly different elevations, with the second wall on slightly higher terrain. This suggests a form of double fortification with the second wall having been potentially higher. The remainder of Area C displayed few clear remains in this level; however, a cuneiform tablet was recovered in locus 1 (C.J) as well as revealing other finds that are discussed below.



Figure 6. Protruding stone walls from Level 2 in Area C.

Living Units:

While the structures in Area A are unclear, they likely form at least two units. In this case, remains of paved floors are found with courses of sand stones. The pavement is laid out without any gaps between each pavement stone. Unfortunately, there is a large disturbed area, where the pavement would have been, by a large storage jar installation from an early phase of Level 1 (Phase B). A later phase in Level 1 (Phase A), with foundation stones for a structure, disturbs this area and extends over the level of the ancient surface. In all the squares in Area A, the remaining architectural finds largely included pavement stones and wall foundations. Overall, the area excavated in Area A for the level reached 380 m² in squares A.A-A.F. The finds did include a large courtyard with a decoration of a small incised Assyrian style flower on a pavement stone in the floor (A.D). It is likely similar decorations would have aligned the surrounding walls. In squares A.A and A.E there is evidence of some intact architecture with wall and foundation remains (Figure 7). In square A.E, a kiln, three storage jars (circular features indicated), and foundations of a stone wall from Level 1 also heavily damaged Level 2. Two intersecting walls, forming a corner, are found in the west part of A.A. These walls are about 1 m wide.

In Area B, a modern house had been constructed, which helped to reveal architectural remains of two ancient structures. In B.A, there is evidence for sand stone pavement in the ancient structures, which, in fact, is of the same type as that found in other parts of Areas A and B. In B.D, including in locus 1, similar pavement was found. In B.E., evidence of modern bomb remains are evident, indicating destruction from relatively recent war damage on the site (probably from the Iran-Iraq war). In addition, oak tree roots damaged this area. The remains mostly include foundation stones, but the structures must have had substantially wide walls, with the wall remains ranging between 0.4-1.5 m

in width. Such features suggest the construction may have been a large building, perhaps an administrative or multilevel structure. Features from B.B-B.D are described in further detail below.

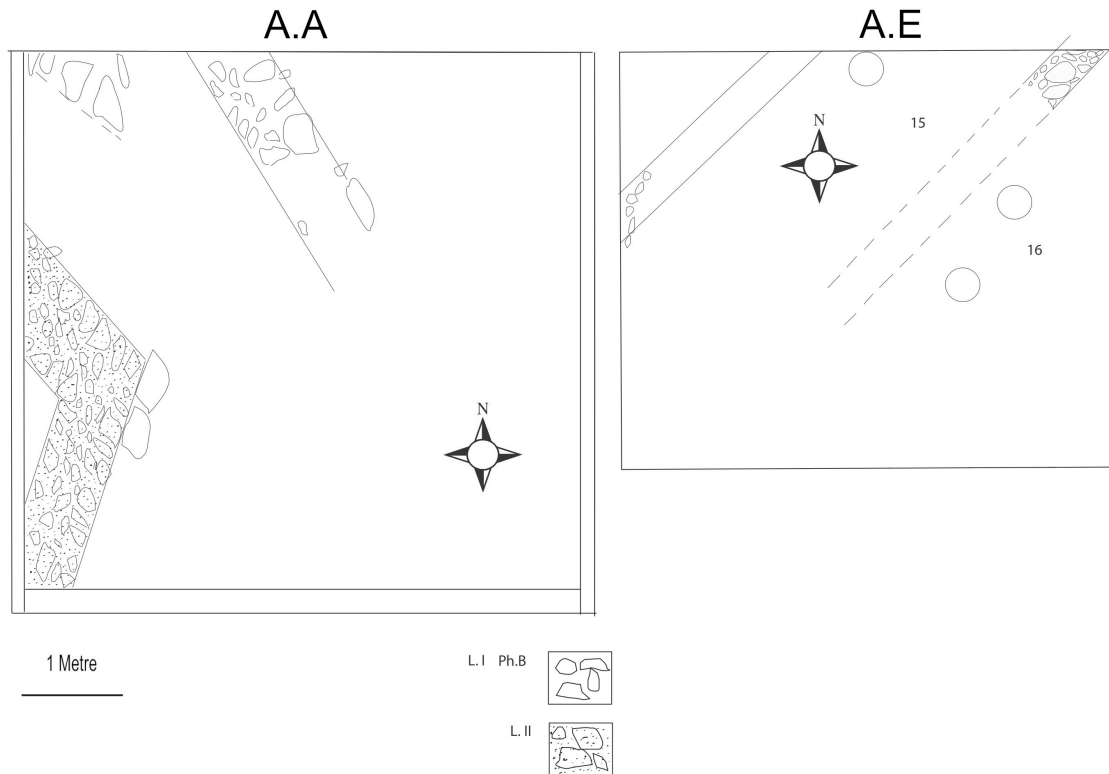


Figure 7. Architecture from Area A (A.A), showing Levels 1 and 2, and A.E, showing Level 2.

Structures in Area B:

In Area B, at least two units are evident for Level 2. Structure 1 (locus 1 and 11) is found in square B.D. Possible threshold stones are found in locus 1, indicating that this could have been one of the entrance to the building and locus 11 could have been a street or courtyard. Perhaps a door socket would have been located in the pavement stone, but the stones are broken so this is unclear. The south corner of the wall in locus 1 is relatively

wide, at nearly 1 m, while the other walls are about 40 cm in width.

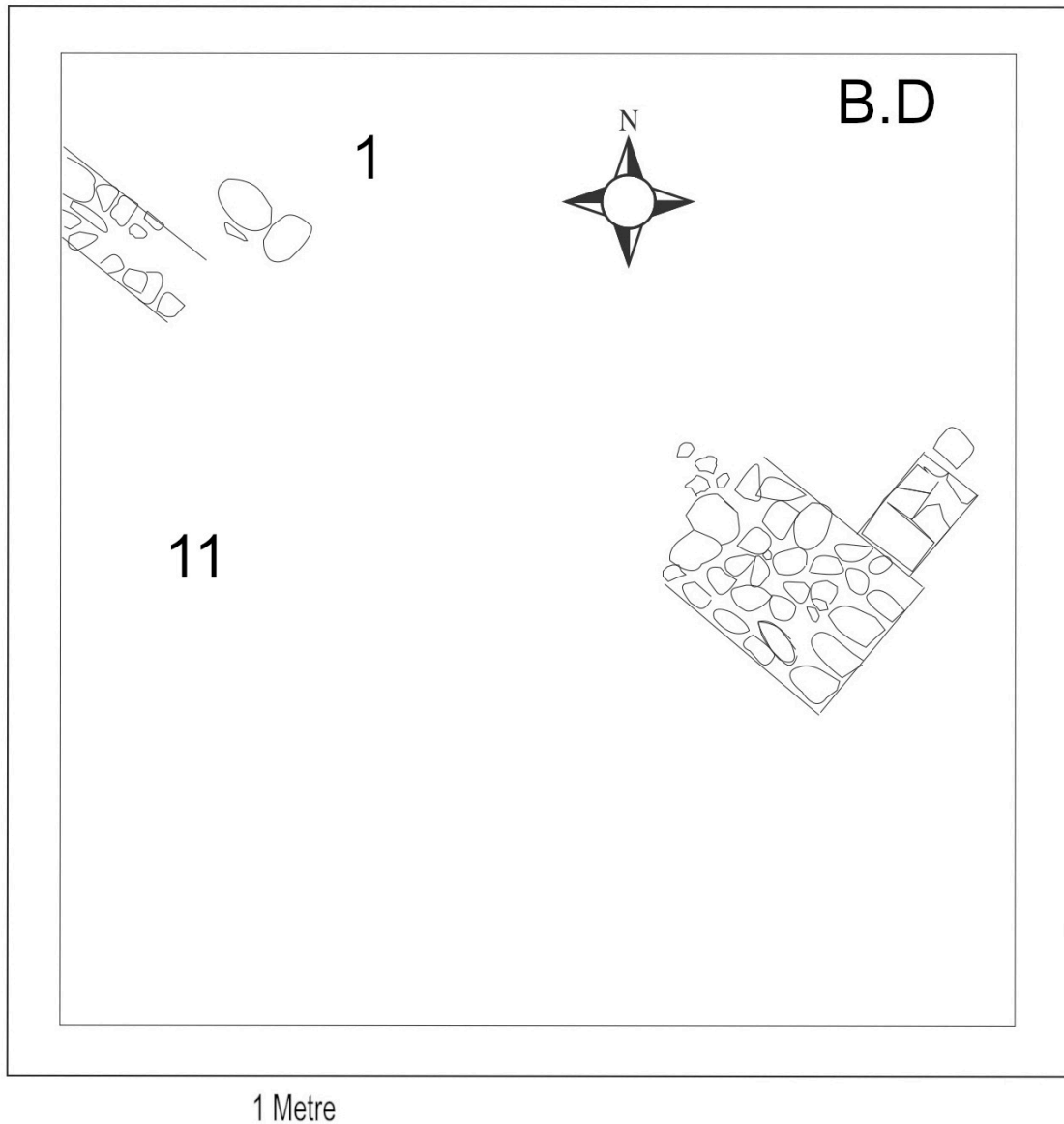


Figure 8. Structure in B.D found in Level 2.

The structure described before (1 and 11) from B.D. extends into square B.B, which may have included loci 1-3 and possibly 6 in B.B. The entrance between loci 1 and 3 in B.B has a large threshold stone and protrudes out of the entrance by 70 cm (Figure 9). Squares B.B. and B.C are distinguished by two loci (loci 4-5) with wide walls, between 1.0-1.5 m width, in squares B.B and B.C. These two loci could form a second structure in Area B Level 2. One of the pavement stones (locus 5) also had a small, incised Assyrian style flower. Outer walls of the structure are in B.C and B.E. In the north section of B.C., an intrusion from a building in level 1 resulted in parts of the wall in the north section of B.C. to be slightly disturbed. Part of an intact pavement of sand stones included two stones decorated each with a line incision in locus 7 in B.C. Locus 6 possibly served as

an alleyway or corridor connecting to locus 5. The loci finds in Area B are all likely to be part of at least two structures, with loci 4-5 forming part of the second structure.

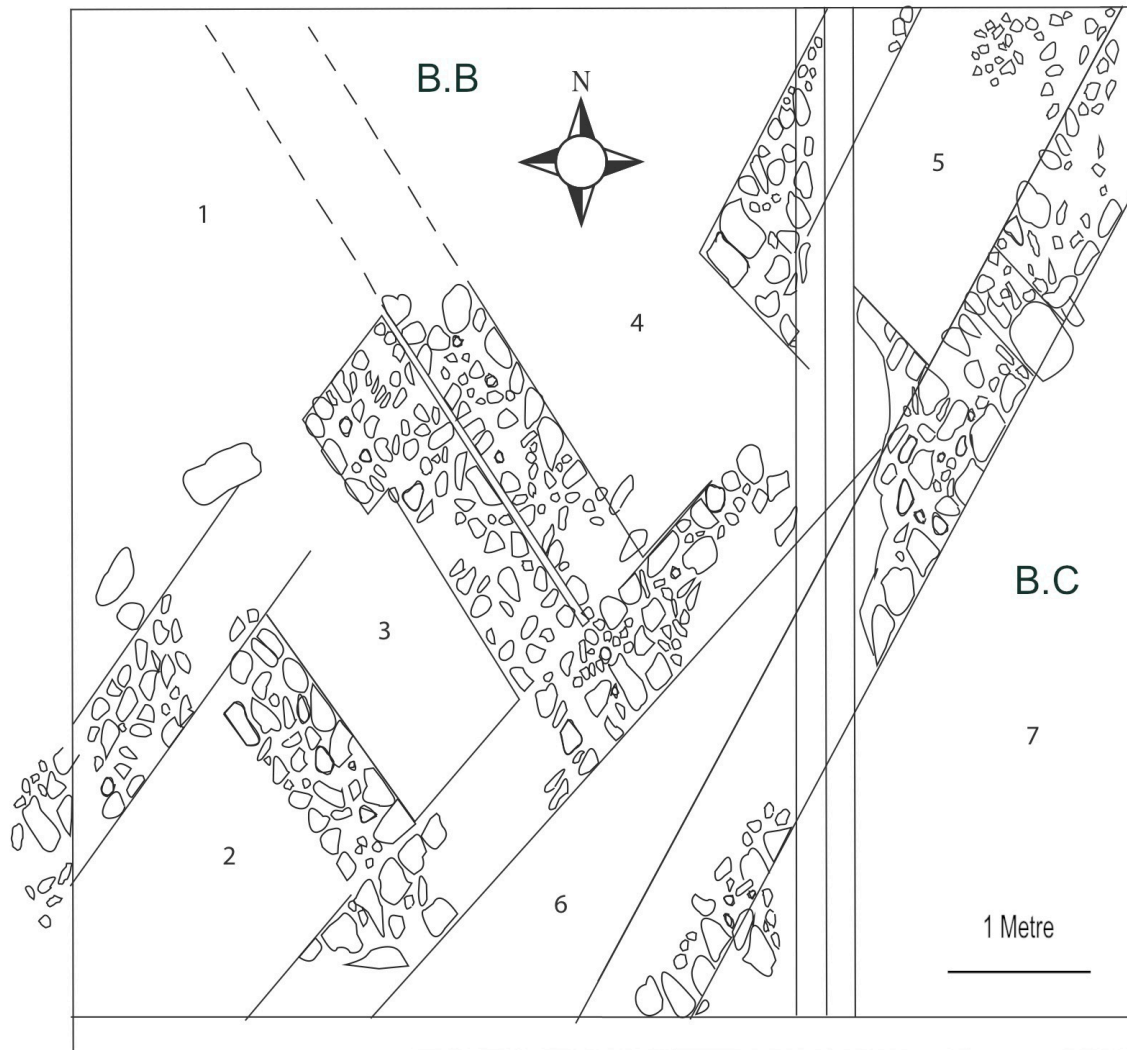


Figure 9. Architectural remains from B.B and B.C in Level 2.

Level 1B

In Areas A through C, evidence for buildings in Level 1 are found, with two identified phases (A & B); Area C mostly has evidence for Phase B, which is the oldest phase, but some evidence of Phase A is also evident there (Figure 5). Area D was also explored, but showed few archaeological remains, as it was on a steep area to the south and mostly mixed pottery was found there suggesting significant erosion has destroyed this part of the site. The level is characterised by remains of iron works, including tools, kilns, slags, and ore.

In Phase B, there is evidence of levelling of the surface and filling parts of the level with reddish sediment. Walls in Area C are generally about 0.8 m wide during this phase, with walls faced with large stones. Some of the stones might have been reused from level

2 architecture. In Area B, the walls are generally weakly built using smaller stones. The architectural and material remains found indicate living quarters and/or workshops for iron making.

Area A:

The remains in Area A are not well preserved (Figure 10). Walls of rectangular rooms are evident (e.g., loci 2, 5, and 12). In A.A, some floor pavement of sand stone is found between two parallel walls that had a northeast-southwest direction. Square A.B shows wall remains datable to Phase B. A small secondary room or installation is evident in locus 6. In A.D, round installations, likely for storage, are evident (loci 9 and 10). In A.E, partial remains of a kiln are found. The kiln was excavated into the ground at a depth of nearly 1 metre, with evidence of burning that affected the paved floor of Level 2. The kiln is poorly preserved and difficult to delineate. There is evidence of iron slags and a mixture of Level 2 pottery, with animal bones mixed into the kiln's remains. Other finds include a group of large storage jars, shown as circled installations in loci 15 and 16, next to the kiln. These jars measure 1.2 m in length with 30 cm diameters and are installed in deep pits. Possible storage may have been grain. In A.B, similar storage jars are evident in loci 5 and 12.

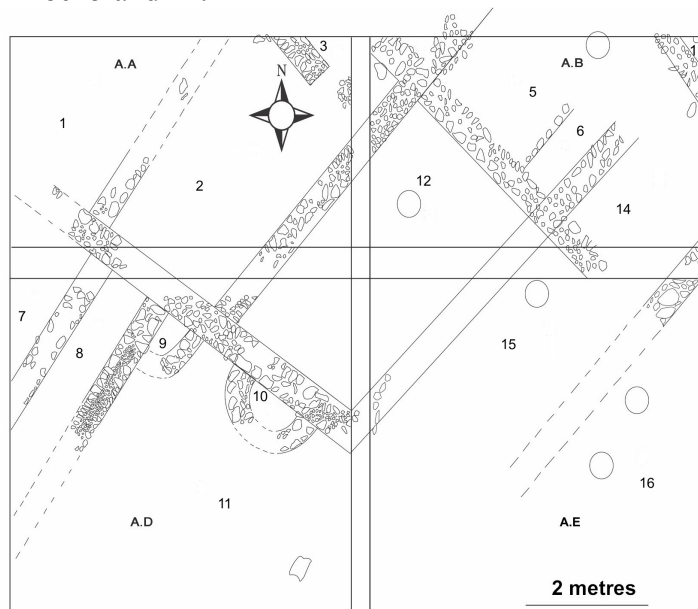


Figure 10. Area A architecture datable to Level 1A.

Area B:

Square B.A (Figure 3) shows evidence of two clear loci (1 and 2) that are separated by a 0.5 m wall. Architectural evidence in square B.A shows a structure with a niche wall facing west. Only one course of stones is preserved, with the exception of parts of the western wall that has multiple courses. In the west wall in locus 2, a niche is evident. A stone with a likely door socket indicates the niche served as a doorway at an earlier phase or the door socket stone was reused in construction. Another wall, running southwest-northeast is also found, but this wall is heavily damaged.

Area C Structures 1-3:

In Area C (Figure 5), remains of rooms were found that could belong to structures designated as Structures 1 (loci 3 and 8, possibly 2) and 2 (loci 1, 4, and 6, possibly 7). The walls incorporate large or long courtyards and rooms (loci 1, 2, and 8); one of the rooms (locus 3) seems to have very large stones used for its construction. Loci 5 and 9 may have formed part of alleyways that connected the two structures. Loci 1 and 2 have evidence of building during Phase A; however, these features may have initially been constructed in Phase B. Only part of the loci in Area C were uncovered due to a shortage of time; however, further structures in C.C., C.G, C.H, and C.F would likely be uncovered if further excavation continued. Two large walls are found in squares C.C and C.H. These likely belong to a new structure, designated as Structure 3. While the remains found in this structure seem to date to the later Phase A, it is possible the surrounding architecture date to Phase B. The outer entrance to this structure is possibly located in C.D, but this is not clear. One large jar burial of an individual buried in a flex position with a small jar found next to the skeleton was found under the floor in C.O (Figure 11). Evidence for iron working is evident here as well, with debris of iron slags scattered around and near the grave.



Figure 11. Jar burial of an individual in a flex position in C.O.

Level 1A

In Area A, the remains of this level are mostly foundation stones, which are only preserved to a height of a few centimetres and sometimes slightly sticking through the surface. In places, however, the level penetrates below the floors of Level 2. Some

reddish sediment is also evident as fill and likely used to even the level in the hilly terrain. The architecture seems to be a rebuilt phase of level 1B, while also perhaps extending beyond the extent of the earlier phase, with storage jars, kilns, and new structures evident. New small storage areas with circular walls are evident in square A.F (Figure 12), similar to that seen in Level 1B. In A.F, the walls are built with medium- and small-sized stones, with the wall widths ranging between 80-70 cm. Most structures do not show evidence for very substantial or large-scale construction; however, large stones derived from Level 2 appear to be incorporated in the walls of 1B.

In Area C (Figure 6), loci 1 and 2 and the walls in C.D, C.G., and C.H are by now established. Storage jars in C.E and C.I are now apparent as well. In C.J and C.N, ephemeral walls were found, which likely represents another sub-phase within Level 1A. In Area D, the steepness of any architectural context was impossible to determine for this phase, although, as stated, architecture was made evident during modern building construction on the site. This phase likely represents modifications of the Level 1B living and iron making/workshop areas.

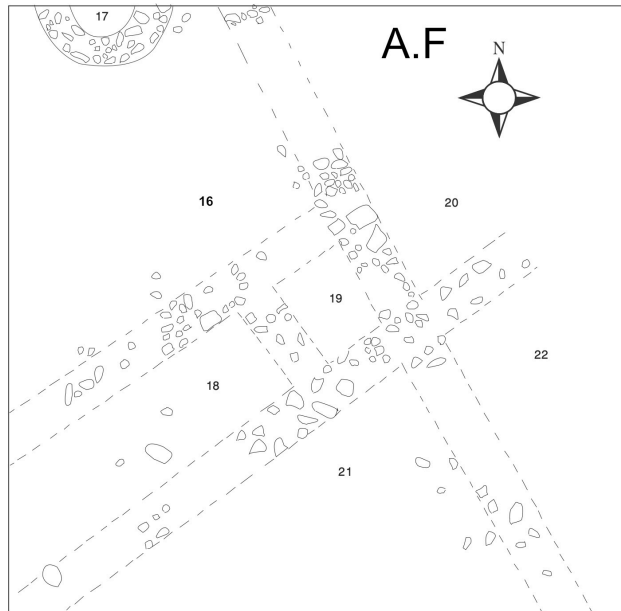


Figure 12. Plan of Level 1A in A.F.

Archaeological Finds

Below we provide descriptions of the types of remains found in the various levels exposed. Unfortunately, many descriptions for the ceramic materials and inclusions are not available for individual sherds; however, general descriptions of the finds are presented. In addition, comparative ceramics from other sites are cited for sherds discussed. Table 1 lists finds from Sitak and the dated parallels. Other objects, including a Neo-Assyrian cuneiform tablet, are discussed as well.

Finds from Level 3

Ceramics from Level 3

Finds from this level include a relatively limited number of ceramics, likely due to the disturbed areas found in the layer as affected by later ancient building activities. This likely means that some of the pottery from Levels 1 and 2 have mixed with Level 3, as there are various similarities noticed. This has forced us to look at the ceramics more carefully in Levels 3 and 2, paying more particular attention to those found on Level 3 floors, as these are more likely to be of a secure context. Common body colours are brown and grey, with reddish colour lacking in general. From the styles observed, the majority of the ceramics that derive from relatively secure contexts are dateable to the late Iron Age period (Figure 13.1-4; Table 1), with finds showing parallels to 7th century ceramics from Nimrud (Oates 1959) and Khirbet Qasrij (Curtis 1989).

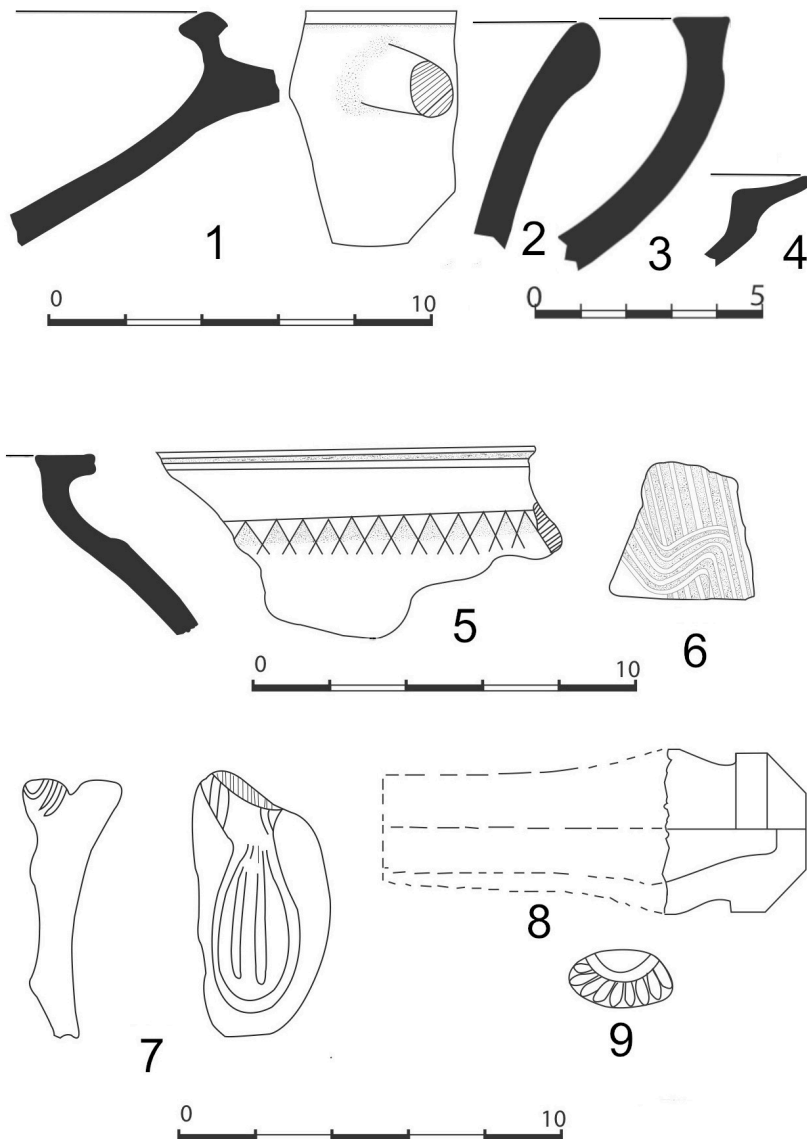


Figure 13. Ceramics from Levels 3 and 2.

Finds from Level 2

One problem with Level 2 is that there is significant building activity from Level 1 that has also mixed some of the remains in this level. Level 1's Phase B walls' foundations, in fact, reach into Level 2 in some places. Nevertheless, the pottery types found and general discussion regarding this layer are possible and given below.

Ceramics from Level 2

In general, what is clear from pottery styles found in this level (Figure 13:-5-9; Figures 14-15; Figure 16.1-5, 12-21) is that there is a mixture of late Iron Age (Figures 14.7, 16.3, 12-16) wares similar to forms seen at Tell al-Hawa (Ball et al. 1995) and late Sassanian (Figure 14.1, 2, 6) styles similar to what is evident at Nuzi and Nineveh (Simpson 2013). On the other hand, some ceramics could date to the early Hellenistic period (Figure 15.3), but such sherds are generally fewer. A few ceramics (Figure 16.6-11) are found mixed between levels 3 and 2. Overall, the ceramics are mostly of reddish clay, with some containing small white grit or chalk-like temper, Iron Age sherds have chaff temper, and various types of sherds in the level have sand temper. No complete vessel were found.

As indicated in Figure 14 (e.g., 1 & 2), some of the ceramics are impressed wares. Common impressions include gazelles with long cylindrical antlers, while crosses with gazelles or by themselves are evident. Such impressions have clear parallels to late Sassanian wares (Simpson 2013), as indicated in Table 1's object comparisons. Similar impressed ceramics are found in Level 1, while the Iron Age styles are more comparable to pottery from Level 3. Other notable finds include a pottery stand with a rim pointed outwardly, deep impressions on the surface with finger-shaped impression on the body (Figure 15.2). Another ceramic shoulder sherd has a design of a crescent on the body (Figure 15.3).

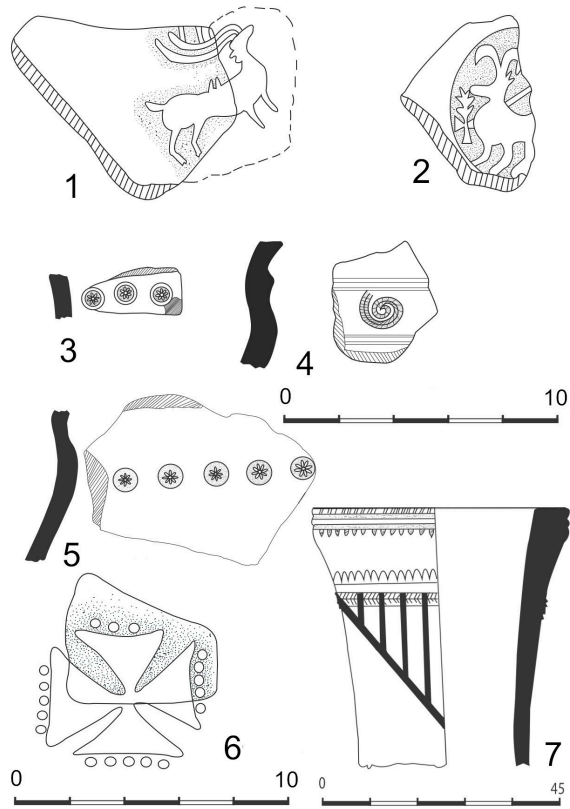


Figure 14. Ceramics from Level 2.

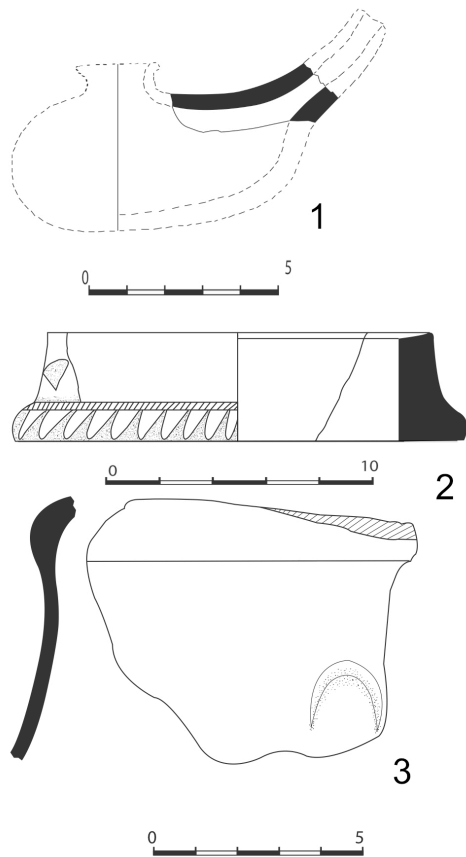


Figure 15. Ceramics from Level 2.

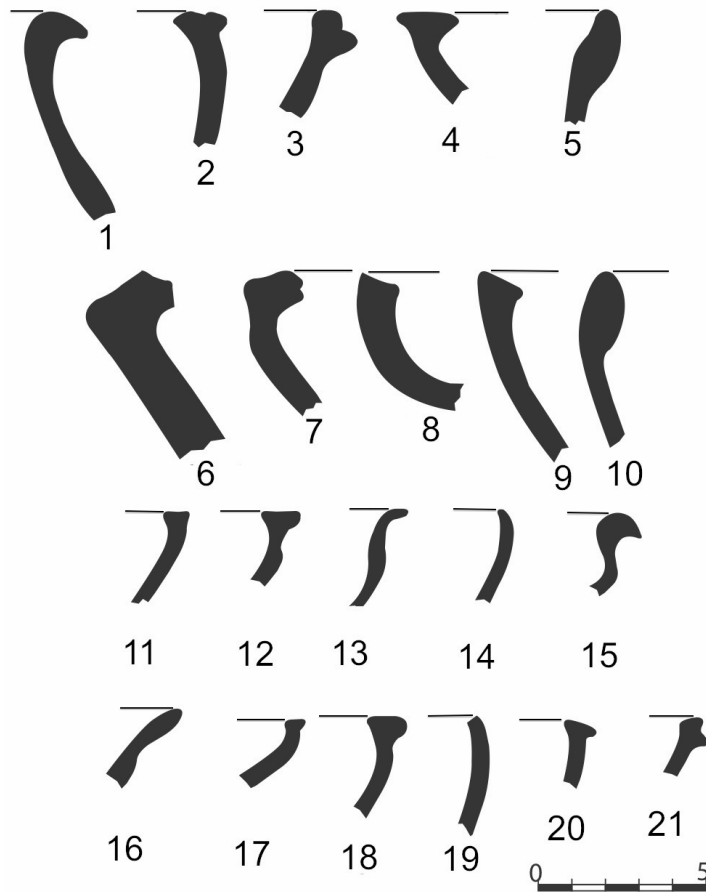


Figure 16. Level 2 and Levels 3-2 mixed sherds.

Tablet

In locus 1 in square C.J and on the floor, a small clay tablet fragment with text in Neo-Assyrian cuneiform script was found (2.7 x 4.0 x 2.5 cm; Figure 17). According to Karen Radner (In Press), this is a legal document concerning a field and seven people, most likely their sale. On the poorly preserved reverse that has a witness list, no date is preserved, and too little of the text remains to suggest a circumstantial dating. The document is sealed with the impressions of fingernails, of which traces of three can be seen on the left side of the obverse, just above the horizontal line – a practice that is attested throughout the Neo-Assyrian period (Radner 1997:38 with n. 177).



Figure 17. Neo-Assyrian tablet found in Area C's (C.J) locus 1 (photo courtesy of Professor Karen Radner; left side is obverse and right is reverse).

Other Finds

Other finds include a ceramic *sikkatu*, found in square B.B locus 6 and in the debris, that was likely placed on the wall as decoration or for hanging other decorations. In addition, a small fragment of frit in the shape of an Assyrian flower was found in square A.B, similar to what has been at other sites from the late 7th century BC. In fact, both the mounting and frit are reminiscent of similar late Iron Age and Neo-Assyrian objects in Iraq and Northwest Iran (Mallowan 1966:82; Albenda 1991:Pl.9; Bahman and Ali 2009). Another find is a large ceramic bead that was found near a bronze chisel on the floor of locus 1 in C.J, which is near where the tablet was found. In the same locus, three fragile baked bricks were found and measure 32 x 32 x 7 cm, which is within expected dimensions for Iron Age or Neo-Assyrian bricks (Robson 1999:289). In B.E., an incised stone object with Assyrian style decoration, perhaps part of a threshold, was also found, but it appeared to have been moved from its original place (Fig. 20).

Level 1B Finds

Ceramics from Level 1B

Unfortunately, there was not enough time to properly draw many of the objects from Level 1B; however, we will discuss general trends and show key findings from this level. From Level 1B, finds include impressed fragments, similar to those mentioned for Level

2. Impressions include gazelles (Fig. 18.5), Maltese-like crosses (Fig. 19.5), flowers and hatchings (Fig. 18.2). These again suggest parallels to late Sasanian finds such as those from Nuzi and Nineveh (Simpson 2013). The large burial jar found (Fig. 11; Fig. 19.1), is cylindrically shaped with two small stump handles attached to the body. The ceramic colour is yellow-reddish with small sand inclusions. The ceramic also has a glaze of dark greenish colour with a slightly gold lustre. Small sherds found in the layer have a similar glaze to this larger burial ceramic. Among other finds, some sherds show a yellow coloured wash. For the most part, the ceramics have inclusions of fine sand and sometimes fine chaff or no chaff. In locus 3 (square C.I), a complete jar of reddish clay colour was found, with sand temper, a rounded body and a slightly arched base. A small cone-shaped lid made of yellowish clay was also found in this locus. The rims and base of the lid are string cut. Finely made plates (Fig. 18.11) with sand and chaff temper were found; once again the wash is of yellow colour. Fragments of impressed wares were also found. Other fragments featuring floral elements and repeating incised circle designs were found (Fig. 18.3). The large storage jars found in Level 1B are elliptical in shape with ring-shaped rims, arched-shaped or flat bases, and red or yellow in body colour. These are generally well fired, although a few were more poorly fired. One storage jar has a pomegranate symbol incised into it. There are also examples of other types of incised wares (Fig. 18.1–2). In general, comparing the manufacture of ceramics between Levels 2 and 1, we see that ceramics in Level 2 are generally better fired and more finely made, while Phase B in Level 1 is of medium quality. By Level 1A, the firing quality is even worse than that seen in Level 1B. While late Iron Age remains still appear in Level 1, the majority of ceramics in this level are dated to the Sasanian, likely late Sasanian, period. Figures 18 and 19 show styles found in this phase.

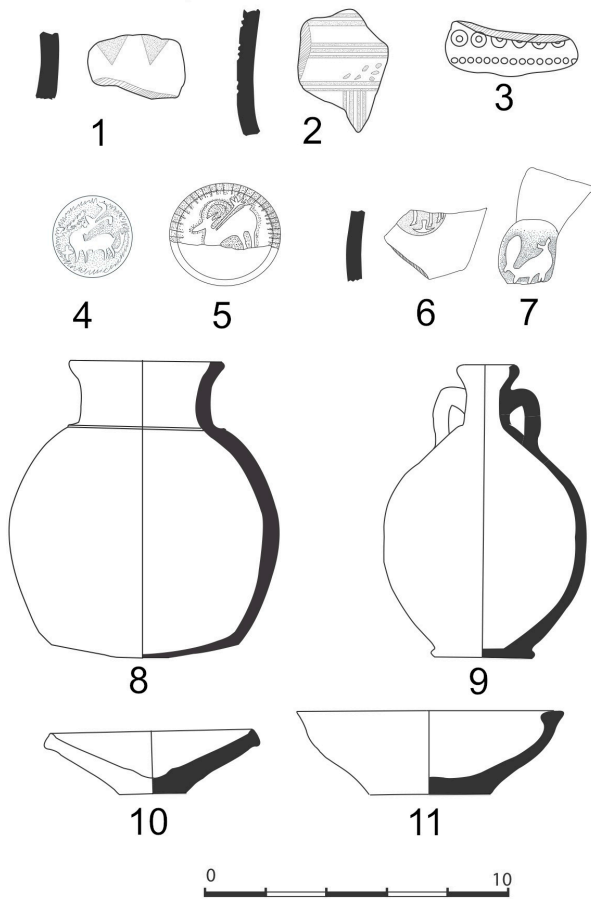


Figure 18. Finds from Level 1.

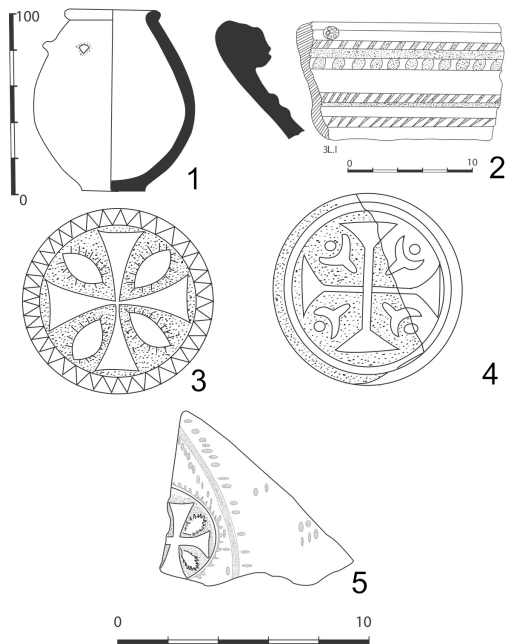


Figure 19. Finds from Level 1.



Figure 20. Incised stone with three bands of decoration.

Iron Tools

As stated, a variety of iron slags, ore, and tools were found. In B.A, within the remains and floor of locus 1 (Figure 3), two pavement stones and tools were found together, including an iron axe (Figure 21.3) and pick. In C.J, a small chisel (Figure 21.1) was found, while other larger chisels were found in various places in Area C (e.g., Figure 21.2). Such chisels could represent remains of a workshop on the settlement.

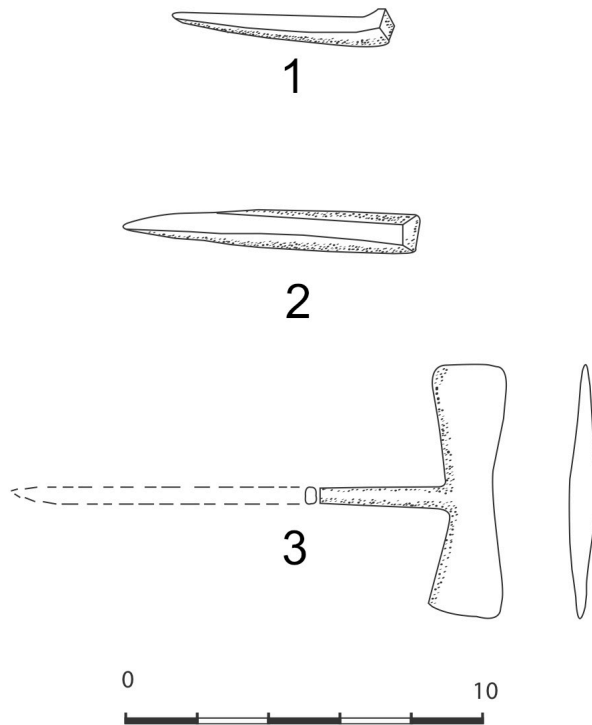


Figure 21. Iron tools found in Level 1B.

Other Objects

Other finds include stone tools, including grinding stones, sharpening tools, pestles, weights, and loom weights.

Level 1A Finds

Ceramics from Level 1A

Impressed sherds were found once again, including those depicting gazelles (Figure 19.4), large flower decorations, bulls, Maltese-like crosses, and circular designs. One Maltese style cross includes an outer circle with jagged edges (Figure 19.3). This indicates some of the types of stamp impressions found earlier continued, while new themes also emerged. This includes the crescent-shaped designs that incorporate a large cross design (Figure 19.4), horned animals (Figure 18.4), and others. The crescent design, similar to that of the cross, has parallels to late Sassanian impressions found at Nineveh (Simpson 2013). The ceramics in the level are generally of pinkish, brown, yellow, and dark and light reddish colours or washes. A part of a lamp was found along with decorated body, rim, and base sherds (Figure 19.2).

Other Finds

A lead-made ornament, perhaps part of a ritualistic sceptre, and made with a mould, was found in the debris of A.B. The object is designed with two rings; the bigger ring has trapezoidal-shaped decorations with two birds sitting on the outside and in between them lies the smaller ring (Figure 22). This object is reminiscent of Luristan-style bronze objects and appears to have Iranian-themed (e.g., ostrich-like birds, triangle and circular decorative elements) designs (Pigott 1999). Other small objects include small blue glass fragments.

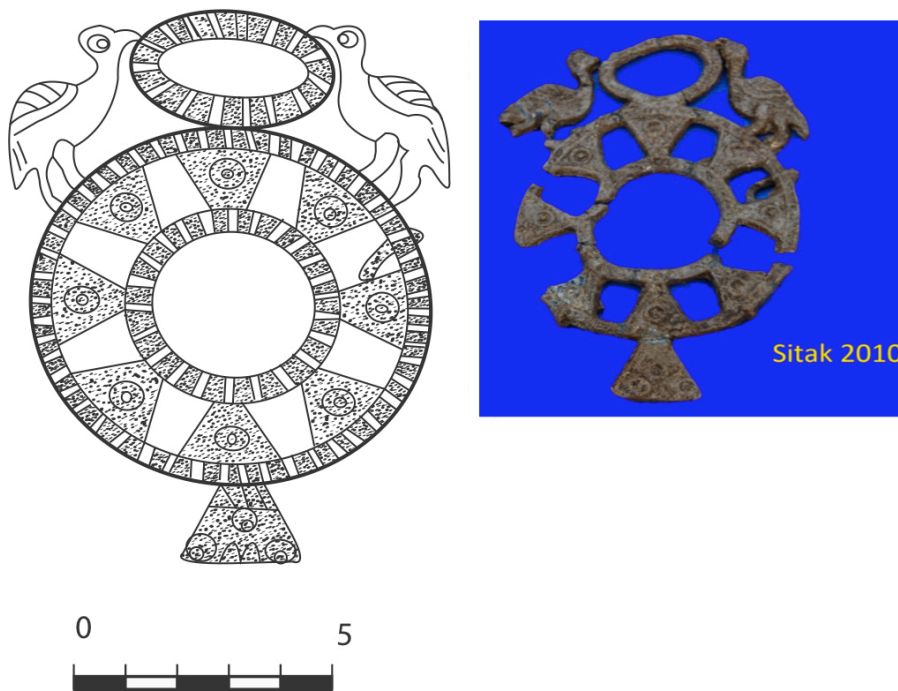


Figure 22. Level 1A's lead made ornament.

Conclusion

The finds from Levels 3-2 suggest that Tell Sitak was occupied during the late first half of the first millennium BC, sometime around the 7th and 6th centuries BC or late Iron Age. The finds of Hellenistic or post-Assyrian wares (e.g., Figure 14.5 and 15.3) suggest the site may have continued into the Achaemenid period. A later Sassanian occupation in Level 1 is evident, suggesting reuse of the site by this time. However, because there is considerable damage to the site, both with recent building activity started prior to excavations and even ancient earth moving activities, stratigraphic understanding of the site is complex and not easily made in all excavated areas. Level 3 does not have substantial remains and is only partially evident in a few places excavated, including A.A, B.A, B.B, and Area C. The ceramics, where found in secure context, are datable to the late Iron Age in this level. In Level 2, and as made evident in the discussion and ceramic descriptions, many areas are mixed and likely disturbed, with a mixture of Sassanian, probable Achaemenid /Hellenistic, and Neo-Assyrian or Iron Age III pottery styles. The remains that are found in better contexts likely indicate a Neo-Assyrian and more general Iron Age III date for the level. The presence of the cuneiform tablet, decorative objects,

architectural remains, and ceramics from less disturbed contexts suggest this is a reasonable conclusion for Level 2. However, ceramics of slightly later date do suggest the site may have continued for sometime after the fall of the Assyrian empire. For Level 1, both Phases A and B, a likely late Sassanian date (6th or 7th centuries AD) seems plausible, with a significant quantity of ceramics datable to that period. Both the late Iron Age and Sassanian periods are known to be well represented in the region (e.g., Altaweel et al. 2012); therefore, the presence of both these periods on the same site is not unexpected. We believe the site was a likely fortress or fortified site occupying the hilltop and likely commanding or protecting the nearby region in the late Iron Age or when the site was occupied by Neo-Assyrians. The later Sassanid presence suggests a site that conducted iron smelting, with finds of iron slag and ore indicating this. The site does not seem to be large, probably less than a hectare, suggesting it was a local iron production centre. Perhaps the site was also a fortress during this period, but this is not clearly evident.

Object	Object Type	Level & Square	Citation of Similar Object	Site/Period
Figure 13.1	Pottery	3	Goff 1985:Fig. 4, No. 15	Bab Jan/Late Iron Age
Figure 13.2	Pottery	3	Curtis 1989:Fig. 40, No. 266	Khirbet Qasrij/Late Neo-Assyrian
Figure 13.3	Pottery	3	Oates 1959:Pl. 35, No. 4.	Nimrud/Late Neo-Assyrian
Figure 13.4	Pottery	3	Anastasio 2010:97, No. 1; Goff 1985: Fig. 4, No. 16	Nimrud/Late Neo-Assyrians
Figure 13.5	Pottery	2	Debevoise 1927:Fig. 140	Seleucia/Parthian
Figure 13.6	Pottery	2		
Figure 13.7	Pottery	2	Debevoise 1927:Fig. 279	Seleucia/Parthian
Figure 13.8	Pottery	2	Anastasio 2010:147, No. 7; Curtis 1989:Fig. 22, KQ9	Tell al-Hawa & Khirbet Qasrij/Late Neo-Assyrian

Figure 13.9	Pottery	2		
Figure 14.1	Pottery	2	Simpson 2013:114, Fig. 3; Wilkinson and Tucker 1995:Fig. 77, Nos. 5,6,7,8,9; Starr 1937:Pl 136, E	NJS survey & Nuzi/Late Sassanian
Figure 14.2	Pottery	2	Simpson 2013:114, Fig. 3; Wilkinson and Tucker 1995:Fig. 77, Nos. 5,6,7,8,9; Starr 1937:Pl 136, E	NJS survey & Nuzi/Late Sassanian
Figure 14.3	Pottery	2	Rutten 1999; Cellerino 2004:Fig. 19, 149	Abu Qubur/Late Achaemenid & Early Hellenistic
Figure 14.4	Pottery	2	Kreppner et al. 2006:Tab. 93, No. 4	Tell Sheik Hamad/Late Neo-Assyrian
Figure 14.5	Pottery	2	Cellerino 2004:Fig. 19, No. 149	Babylon/Achaemenid & Hellenistic
Figure 14.6	Pottery	2	Simpson 2013:114, Fig. 3, No. 13; Starr 1937:Pl 136, E;	Nuzi/Sassanian

Figure 14.7	Pottery	2	Anastasio 2010:Pl. 34, No. 4; Postgate et al. 1997:Pl. 97, No. 1173	Tell Rimah/Late Neo-Assyrian
Figure 15.1	Pottery	2		
Figure 15.2	Pottery	2		
Figure 15.3	Pottery	2	Curtis and Green 1997:Fig. 63, No. 464	Khirbet Khatuniye/Post-Assyrian
Figure 16.1	Pottery	2	Curtis 1989:Fig. 36, No. 220; Goff 1985: Fig. 3, No. 13	Khirbet Qasrij/Late Neo-Assyrian
Figure 16.2	Pottery	2	Curtis 1989:Fig. 27, No. 73	Khirbet Qasrij & Bab Jan/Late Neo-Assyrian & Late Iron Age
Figure 16.3	Pottery	2	Anastasio 2010:187, No. 19; Ball et al. 1989:Fig. 26	Tell al-Hawa/Late Neo-Assyrian
Figure 16.4	Pottery	2	Jamieson 1999:304, Fig. 6, No. 2-3	Tell Ahmar/Late Neo-Assyrian
Figure 16.5	Pottery	2	Anastasio 2010:129. Pl. 26-1; Curtis and Green 1997:Fig. 43, No. 197	Khirbet Khatuniye/Late Neo-Assyrian

Figure 16.6	Pottery	2-3	Oates and Oates 1959:32, Fig. 88	Ain Sinu/Late Parthian
Figure 16.7	Pottery	2-3	Curtis 1997:Fig.57, No. 369	Khirbet Dier Situn/Late Sassanian
Figure 16.8	Pottery	2-3	Curtis 1997:Fig.57, No. 370	Khirbet Dier Situn/Late Sassanian
Figure 16.9	Pottery	2-3	Curtis and Green 1997:Fig. 35, No. 118	Khirbet Khatuniye/Late Neo-Assyrian
Figure 16.10	Pottery	2-3	Müller 1996:429, No. 6	Lidar Höyük/Iron Age
Figure 16.11	Pottery	2-3	Eidemn and Ackermann 1999:321, Fig. 6, No. 10	Tell Jurn Kabir/Iron Age
Figure 16.12	Pottery	2	Anastasio 2010:Pl.56, No. 7; Postgate et al. 1997:Pl. 56, No. 495	Tell Rimah/Late Neo-Assyrian
Figure 16.13	Pottery	2	Müller 1999:413, No. 4	Lidar Höyük/Iron Age
Figure 16.14	Pottery	2	Müller 1999:417, No. 9	Lidar Höyük/Iron Age
Figure 16.15	Pottery	2	Curtis 1989:Fig. 24, No. 22	Khirbet Qasrij/Late Neo-Assyrian
Figure 16.16	Pottery	2	Anastasio 2010:Pl. 10, No. 2;	Ashur/Late Neo-Assyrian

Figure 16.17	Pottery	2	Anastasio 2010:Pl. 37, No. 14; Lines 1954:Pl. 37, No. 6	Khirbet Kharhasan & Nimrud/Late Neo-Assyrian
Figure 16.18	Pottery	2	Green 1999:126, Fig.8, No.6	Eski Mosul/Late Neo-Assyrian & Post-Assyrian
Figure 16.19	Pottery	2		
Figure 16.20	Pottery	2	Blaylock 1999:278, Fig. 5, No. 2	Tille Höyük/ Iron Age
Figure 16.21	Pottery	2	Anastasio 2010:187, No. 19; Ball et al. 1989:Fig. 26	Tell al-Hawa/Late Neo-Assyrian
Figure 18.1	Pottery	1B		
Figure 18.2	Pottery	1B		
Figure 18.3	Pottery	1B	Curtis and Green 1997:Fig. 58, No.389	Khirbet Khatuniye/Post-Assyrian
Figure 18.4	Pottery	1A	Simpson 2013:114, Fig. 3; Starr 1937:Pl 136, B, E, H	Nineveh and Nuzi/Late Sassanian
Figure 18.5	Pottery	1B	Simpson 2013:114, Fig. 3; Starr 1937:Pl 136, B, E, H	Nineveh and Nuzi/Late Sassanian

Figure 18.6	Pottery	1A	Simpson 2013:114, Fig. 3; Starr 1937:Pl 136, B, E, H	Nineveh and Nuzi/Late Sassanian
Figure 18.7	Pottery	1B	Simpson 2013:114, Fig. 3; Starr 1937:Pl 136, B, E, H	Nineveh and Nuzi/Late Sassanian
Figure 18.8	Pottery	1B	Debevoise 1927:Fig. 178; Kennet 2004:J2.1	Seleucia & Ras al-Khaimah/Parthian and Sassanian
Figure 18.9	Pottery	1B	Debevoise 1927:Fig. 287	Seleucia/Parthian
Figure 18.10	Pottery	1B	Curtis 1989:Figs.26, No. 59	Khirbet Qasrij/Late Neo-Assyrian
Figure 18.11	Pottery	1B	Kennet 2004:B7.1; Schneider 1999:336, No. 10	Ras al-Khaimah/Sassanian
Figure 19.1	Pottery	1B; Square C.O		
Figure 19.2	Pottery	1A	Oates and Oates 1959:240, No. 51	Ain Sinu/Late Parthian
Figure 19.3	Pottery	1A	Simpson 2013:114, Fig. 3, No. 13; Starr 1937:Pl 136, E	Nineveh and Nuzi/Late Sassanian
Figure 19.4	Pottery	1A	Simpson 2013:14, Fig. 3, Nos. 7 & 13	Nineveh/Late Sassanian

Figure 19.5	Pottery	1B	Simpson 2013:14, Fig. 3, No. 13; Starr 1937:Pl 136, E	Nineveh and Nuzi/Late Sassanian
Figure 20.1	Stone tool	1B; Square C.J		
Figure 20.2	Stone tool	1B; Area C		
Figure 20.3	Iron axe	1B		
Figure 21	Lead ornament	1A; Square A.B		

Table 1. Sherds and other objects found at Tell Sitak with comparable sites and periods given.

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